

Eric Holder attacks voting restrictions

By: Bobby Cervantes
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Attorney General Eric Holder isn't leaving yet — and voter suppression issues are where he thinks the most work needs to be done.

Holder said Tuesday that he would not stay at his post for the next four years but offered no timetable for his departure during a second-term Obama administration.

"I've got work that I still want to do," Holder said. "I'm not going to be the Janet Reno of the Justice Department, who served two full terms."

In a speech at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum in Boston, Holder slammed "our antiquated registration system" as the "single largest barrier" to American voters, specifically criticizing long voting lines and complicated registration rules during the 2012 election.

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Holder suggested an "automatic, portable" registration system that allows election officials to use government databases to register voters automatically and keep their registration current when they move. He also said reforms could include longer voting hours and weekend voting, same-day registration and a new method of redistricting "that can't be abused to protect incumbents and undercut electoral competition."

Holder also defended the department's work to halt voter ID laws in Texas and South Carolina that courts said violated the Voting Rights Act.

"The notion that this is somehow a thing of the past is belied by the experience we had months ago, some of which happened outside covered jurisdictions," he said. "I think we also have to remember that this was something that was reimposed six years ago. ... We're not at a stage yet where the Voting Rights Act has lost its vitality or need."

Holder also said that in about a month, the department would issue its policy regarding the voter-approved initiatives in Washington and Colorado that legalized recreational marijuana use.

"There's a tension now," he said. "I think we'll come up with the policy that is respective of federal law and makes sure we're effective in our fight on crime."

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